

FY-2003
GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM (GRP)
RANKING CRITERIA WORKSHEET
LOUISIANA

Participant: _____ Application No.: _____

Farm No. _____ Tract No. _____

Land being offered is currently being utilized as a grazing operation for domestic livestock and is 40 ac. or larger in size. The land includes grazing lands; land that contains forbs or shrubs and is currently being grazed by domestic livestock; including native or improved rangeland, pastureland, savannas and riparian areas. Yes ☐ No ☐
[If "Yes" continue. If "no", discontinue ranking and notify the applicant the land is ineligible for the GRP in FY-2003.]

Type of agreement offered (check one): Rental Agreements: ☐ year; ☐ year; ☐ year; ☐ year
Easement: ☐ year; ☐ permanent

Summary of offered land (Land types other than rangeland, pastureland and grazed forest are not eligible to be offered):

Enter nearest whole acre

Total acres offered _____ ac.

Acres needing restoration _____ ac.

Acres of Native Cover (including restored Natives) _____ ac

Enter to nearest whole dollar

Estimated restoration costs \$_____ (Total cost share required for restoration)

Estimated total cost of rental agreement \$_____ (Annual rental x total acres x length of contract)

Estimated total easement cost \$_____ (Estimated easement cost x total acres)

RANKING CRITERIA (part A.)		Circle Correct Value	Score
A. THREATS TO CONVERSION			
1) Threat to conversion – urban land [Land is located in Louisiana within a targeted Parish]			
High Risk		200	
Medium Risk		100	
Low Risk		0	
			Score
2) Threat to conversion - cultivation [Percent of offered land suitable for cultivation. Percent of offer with soil map units having cropland capability classes I, II and III. If soil map units have predominate cover of native rangeland ($\geq 75\%$), multiply points times two.]			
75% or greater of the offered acres in cropland class I, II and III		100	
50% – 74% of the offered acres in cropland class I, II and III		50	
Less than 50% of the offered acres in cropland class I, II and III		0	
			Score
3) Threat to conversion - invasive plants [Area must have presence of or be adjacent to invasive species. Chinese tallow, cogongrass, Chinese privet, and/or honey locust.]			
Species present on offered acres at greater than 50% of offered acres impacted		100	
Species present on offered acres at 30 - 50% of offered acres impacted		50	
Species present on land immediately adjacent to the offered acres		20	
Species not present		0	
			Score
Total points for Threat To Conversion (A.1+A.2+ A.3)= Total (Maximum allowed is 500 points)			A. Total

GRP RANKING CRITERIA WORKSHEET (continued)
LOUISIANA

Application No.: _____

RANKING CRITERIA (part B)		Circle Correct Value	Score
B. NON-CONVERSION CONSIDERATIONS			
1) Enrollment option selected by applicant. [Weight is assigned to the option providing the greatest opportunity to meet the long-term objectives of the program.]			
<input type="checkbox"/> 10-year rental agreement		2	
<input type="checkbox"/> 15-year rental agreement		5	
<input type="checkbox"/> 20-year rental agreement		10	
<input type="checkbox"/> 30-year rental agreement		20	
<input type="checkbox"/> 30-year easement		20	
<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent easement		40	
		Score	
2) Acres of grazing land to be enrolled [Area enrolled will have Prescribed Grazing (528A), Forage Harvest Management (511), and/or Use Exclusion (472) planned and maintained in the conservation plan.]			
40 – 79 acres		0	
80 - 159 acres		5	
160 - 319 acres		10	
320 - 640 acres		15	
641 or more acres		20	
		Score	
3) Location significance - Proximity of area offered to other protected areas such as refuges, and wildlife management areas, national forests, natural areas, or permanent conservation easements [Protected areas must be 500 ac. or greater in size.]			
Area is immediately adjacent to a protected area		10	
Area is not adjacent, but within 1/4 mile of a protected area		6	
Area is between 1/4 and 1/2 mile of a protected area		2	
Area is greater than 1/2 miles of a protected area		0	
		Score	
4) Area offered includes predominately native rangeland and prairies [Area must be protected from uncontrolled livestock use by Prescribed Grazing (528A), Forage Harvest Management (511) or Use Exclusion (472) to receive points].			
Area offered is 75% or greater native grasslands		30	
		Score	
5) Area offered enhances stream corridors / riparian zones [All riparian areas must be protected from uncontrolled livestock access by Prescribed Grazing (528A) and/or Use Exclusion (472) in order to receive points].			
Stream corridor/riparian zone will be protected from uncontrolled livestock access		10	
		Score	
6) Critical habitat for at-risk wildlife or protection of threatened plant species (Listed in Section 2 of the FOTG)			
Area offered is known habitat for at-risk species and benefits to the species will occur through development of a conservation plan that addresses habitat requirements for the identified animal or plant. Name specie(s): _____		10	
		Score	
7) Cost for restoration practices			
No restoration costs		50	
		Score	
Total points for Non-Conversion (B.1+B.2+B.3+B.4+B.5+B.6+B.7)=Total (Maximum allowed is 170 points)			B. Total
TOTAL POINT VALUE FOR OFFERED AREA (A. + B.)			

Evaluation Completed by: (signatures)

Designated Conservationist

Date

Applicant

Date

LOUISIANA - GUIDANCE FOR RANKING GRP APPLICATIONS

The following guidance is effective beginning July 9, 2003, and will be used for evaluating all GRP applications received in fiscal year 2003 (June 30, 2003 through September 30, 2003) :

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The use of the terms native cover, native grassland, or native rangeland in this worksheet refers to land possessing native grasses, forbs and shrubs, that have never been plowed or otherwise manipulated by tillage or other similar activity; or land that has been restored to native grasses, forbs and shrubs (the plant community found prior to European settlement), including switchgrass, indiangrass, gammagrass, big bluestem, little bluestem, etc..

A. THREATS TO CONVERSION – The GRP Notice of Fund Availability (NOFA) requires priority consideration be given to grasslands under the greatest threat of conversion. The identified threats include urbanization, cultivation, and loss of plant and animal biodiversity.

1) Threat to conversion – urban land

Assign points in this category for land located in the parishes identified in the 1997 NRI as land having greatest expansion of urban build-up 1982-1997. All parishes in Louisiana have been rated for threat to conversion as either high, medium or low (see Louisiana Map titled “Grazing Land Potential for Conversion to Urban Land”).

2) Threat to conversion – cultivation

Assign points under this category based on the percent of the offered acres with soil map units having desirable classification for conversion to cropland. Cropland is not eligible for enrollment in the GRP. However, there are many acres of grassland, native and introduced, that could be converted to cropland with minimal land treatment costs by the land holders. The soil map units with the greatest potential for cropland conversion have a non-irrigated cropland capability classification of class I, II or III. These classifications are recorded in Section 2 of the Field Office Technical Guide, Cropland Interpretations, Land Capability and Yields per Acre of Crops Report. If the offered cover on at least 75% of the class I, II and III land is historic native grasslands, multiply the assigned points by two.

4) Threat to conversion – invasive plants

Assign points under this category based on the percent of offered acres covered by the targeted invasive plant species. The specie(s) **must** be present on the offered land or the land immediately adjacent to the offered land must be infested at a concentration that poses an imminent threat to the offered acres. If the specie is not present on the offered acres or adjacent property score zero points. Targeted species for this evaluation period include Chinese Tallow (*Triadica sebifera*), Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*), Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*). Participants will be required to remove and maintain the control of these species for the life of the agreement. Restoration cost-share may be available for the initial treatment within two years of enrollment in the GRP. Following the initial treatment the participant will have to maintain the population of these plants at or below a 15% plant composition for the field in which they are present.

B. Non-Conversion Evaluation Considerations. The criteria in this section will be used to further evaluate applications that provide the greatest support to existing grazing operations and enhance the biodiversity through protection of the grassland resource. For the FY2003 NOFA, emphasis is placed on grasslands that do not require restoration cost-share assistance.

1) Enrollment options selected by the applicant

Assign points in this category based on the enrollment option selected by the participant. The points are weighted to the enrollment options providing the greatest long-term protection of the grassland resource.

2) Acres of grazing lands to be protected, restored, or enhanced

Area enrolled will have Prescribed Grazing (528A) &/or Forage Harvest Management (511) planned and maintained in the conservation plan for the life of the agreement/easement. Exclusion from easements may not exceed one (1) undeveloped two (2) ac. site per 640 acres offered. Points are awarded to give preference for physical site conditions and ownership patterns that offer a likelihood that the site will retain its habitat function and values.

3) Proximity of area offered to other protected areas such as refuges, wildlife management areas, national forests, natural areas, and permanent conservation easements

Proximity to other protected grassland areas will be as measured from the closest point on the edge of the offered acreage. Other protected areas must be at least 500 acres in size to allow points in this category. Land enrolled in the CRP or WRP 10-year restoration agreements **do not qualify** as other protected areas for wildlife habitat under this category. WRP 30-year and perpetual easements can be considered as protected habitat areas.

4) Area offered includes predominately native rangeland and prairies

Assign points for the percent of offered land that is native grasslands that have never been tilled or re-established by planting. Abandoned cropland fields that have established native plants through natural regeneration, native range plantings, trees and introduced grasses do not contribute to the 75% criteria.

5) Area Offered Will Include Restoration or Enhancement of Stream Corridors/Riparian Zones

Assign points under this category when a stream and adjacent buffer will be protected from livestock grazing or encroachment from cropping, by fencing or use exclusion. Areas within the protected corridor/riparian area will be established to native vegetation by either natural regeneration or by planting grasses, trees, or shrubs as determined on site by NRCS field staff in consultation with the applicant. Minimum widths of protected corridors/riparian areas will be in accordance with the Standard and Specification for Riparian Forest Buffer (391). Limited summer grazing that avoids nesting and fawning seasons and allows for fall re-growth can be planned as a wildlife management practice where habitat benefits would be achieved. Tree plantings will have livestock excluded for the entire period of establishment. Score this category only when all streams are protected and restored. Streams for this criterion are perennial streams as defined and designated on USGS topographic maps. If no perennial streams are present on the offered acres score no points in this category.

6) Critical habitat for at-risk wildlife or protection of threatened plant species

Assign points only when the offered acres are within a parish (see Louisiana Habitat Maps) identified as significant habitat for at-risk wildlife specie(s), Gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) and/or red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides deudrocopos boreslis*). In order for the application to receive points for red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides deudrocopos boreslis*) habitat, the offered acres must consist of longleaf pine savannas and the pine stand must be greater than 30 years of age. Conservation practices will be installed and maintained to the habitat needs of the specie(s). We can never be sure that the targeted species will utilize habitats maintained or enhanced by conservation practices, but we can insure that the practices will provide all or part of the habitat requirements of the species. Be sure that the wildlife habitat improvement plan will provide habitat that is suitable for use by the targeted species before assigning points under this category.

7) Cost Per Acre for Restoration

Assign points only when there are no restoration cost being requested by the applicant.